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AM-BOKASSA

DAKAR, SENEGAL, AUG 15 (REUTER) - EMPEROR BOKASSA OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE ORDERED AND PROBABLY TOOK PART IN THE APRIL MASSACRE OF ABOUT 100 SCHOOLCHILDREN, AN INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF LEGAL EXPERTS SAID HERE TODAY.

THE COMMISSION'S CHAIRMAN QUOTED WITNESSES AS SAYING THE EMPEROR PUT OUT THE EYE OF A SCHOOLBOY WITH A SHARPENED CANE AND PERSONALLY SHOT 30 PERSONS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

THE FIVE-MAN COMMISSION, SET UP AT A FRANCO-AFRICAN SUMMIT IN MAY TO INVESTIGATE REPORTS OF THE MASSACRE, SAID IN ITS REPORT PUBLISHED HERE TODAY THAT THE BODIES OF THE SLAUGHTERED CHILDREN WERE BURIED IN COMMUNAL GRAVES OR THROWN INTO A RIVER.

"NUMEROUS PRECISE OBJECTIVE AND CONCURRING TESTIMONIES... INDICATE THAT EMPEROR BOKASSA WAS PRESENT AT THREE DIFFERENT TIMES INSIDE THE NGARBA JAIL AND PARTICIPATED IN THE MASSACRES," THE COMMISSION REPORTED.

ABOUT 200 PERSONS, MOSTLY CHILDREN, WERE IMPRISONED IN NGARBA IN THE CAR CAPITAL OF BANGUI AFTER RIOTING AGAINST AN ORDER FROM THE EMPEROR THAT THEY MUST BUY SCHOOL UNIFORMS MADE BY A COMPANY BELONGING TO A CLOSE RELATIVE OF HIS.

MORE 1651

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY RKS DATE 10/26/82
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AM-BOKASSA 2 DAKAR

EMPEROR BOKASSA HAS DENIED THAT SCHOOLCHILDREN WERE MASSACRED EVER SINCE THE FIRST ALLEGATIONS WERE MADE MAY 16 BY THE LONDON-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

HIS LEGAL ADVISOR, MANDABAD HORNOS, IN A FIRST REACTION TO THE REPORT, SAID HERE THAT "IT CONTAINS NO PROOF THAT THE EMPEROR TOOK PART IN THE ALLEGED MASSACRES."

THE COMMISSION, COMPOSED OF LAWYERS FROM RWANDA, TOGO, LIBERIA AND THE IVORY COAST UNDER SENEGALESE CHAIRMAN YOUSSOU NDIAYE, SAID IT TOOK EVIDENCE FROM BETWEEN 150 AND 200 WITNESSES, INCLUDING DOCTORS, RED CROSS OFFICIALS, CLERGY, TEACHERS AND PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN.

IT WAS MR NDIAYE, WHO PRESENTED THE REPORT AT A PRESS CONFERENCE, WHO GAVE DETAILS OF EMPEROR BOKASSA'S ALLEGED PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT.

HE SAID ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER KILLED IN THE PRISON VARIED BETWEEN 50 AND 200, BUT THE COMMISSION BELIEVED THE FIGURE OF 100 WAS CLOSEST TO THE TRUTH.

REUTER 1653